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THE ART AMATEUR

DEVOTED TO THE CULTIVATION OF
ART IN THE HOUSEHOLD

A MONTHLY JOURNAL

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JAPANESE BRONZE VASES WITH INLAID AND RELIEF DECORATION.

DRAWN BY CAMILLE PITON.

IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. R. E. MOORE, NEW YORK. (SEE PAGE 2.)

[Copyright by Montague Marks 1881.]

CONTEMPORARY WOOD-ENGRAVING.

THE exhibition of wood-engraving in Boston, reviewed elsewhere, affords such a rare opportunity for study that it is to be hoped that during the winter the collection may also be seen in New York. In the absence of such opportunity, the general reader may derive pleasure and profit from visiting the principal book-store in his place of residence and peeping between the covers of the holiday books of the season, brought out by the publishing houses which make a specialty of fine art works. Perhaps we may assist the lounge by some remarks, suggested by a pile of recent illustrated volumes now lying on the table before us. We have here a wealth of wood-engravings of varying degrees of excellence and strongly marked contrasts in style of execution.

For the sake of future comparison, let us first turn the leaves of this quarto of "Paradise Lost," illustrated by Doré and published by Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co. It is not a new work, but it will long be a standard one; so one need not be surprised to see it turning up again this season. Nowhere, perhaps, can be found better examples of the orthodox school of line engraving than in this very attractive volume. We find in it the names of Jennard, Laplante, Hotelin, Gusmand, Smeeton, Pannemaker, Gauchard, Hoyot, Ligny, Piaud, Goebel and Deschamps—all masters of the burin. Within the limits of this notice we cannot attempt to speak of them in detail. Nor indeed is it necessary; for among the best wood engravers of the old school there is little of that individuality of expression one finds in the work of such Americans as Anthony, Cole, Hoskin, Marsh, Kruell, Juengling, and Closson. The former translate according to academical canons; the latter reproduce according to artistic conceptions. Hence in the Doré illustrations there is a pleasing unity of style in harmony with the artist's design, such as it would be impossible to obtain in applying the principles of the American school.

We call attention to the plate illustrating the words

"Some natural tears they dropt, but wiped them soon,"

which occur in the twelfth book. (In our copy, by the way, this plate is bound in the second book.) This exquisite block is cut by Deschamps. What a line he has! How clean, broad, and free! In all probability he would find little to admire in a characteristic reproduction by an engraver of Harper's or The Century of a sketch in oils, showing with ostentatious fidelity the texture of the canvas and the marks of the brush. But we venture to say that there is no engraver of Harper's or The Century who would not take off his hat to such an artist as Deschamps and call him master.

Speaking of these very deservedly popular magazines reminds us that at our elbow are the bound volumes of Scribner's Magazine for the past year, and of St. Nicholas, its comely younger brother. In our admiration of the French engravers of the old school, let us not fail to do justice to the American founders of the new. It is something to be original—to have ideas; and no one will deny this merit to the enterprising publishers of The Century. In skimming the pages of the two magazines we cannot repress our admiration for the courage and catholicity of these gentlemen. They have, at great expense, experimented on their theories as to what wood-engraving should be, until they have learned probably all that they can learn on the subject. When the history of the art in America shall be written, the collector of data will find in the two handsome volumes of Scribner's for 1881 a fair epitome of all that is best and worst in the work of the new school. In the matter of illustrations in St. Nicholas, which, without doubt, is the best children's magazine in the world, the publishers have been more conservative, wisely remembering that the little ones want a story conveyed to the eye with great directness, and that they are not likely to be pleased with "impressionist" pictures. We find in the current number a little backsliding in this important regard; but the mistake, we should think, must be too evident to be repeated.

What we have said of the bound volumes of "Scribner's" and "St. Nicholas" will naturally apply to the superbly printed quarto of "Selected Proofs" from those magazines, which The Century Company has brought out for the holidays. The selections are made evidently with much care from the two portfolios of illustrations already noticed in these columns.

It is not too much to say that nothing has been done by the new firm of James R. Osgood & Co. so credita-

ble to the old name as the beautiful edition of Owen Meredith's "Lucille." The poem cannot be called a great one; but it is a charmingly told story of a true woman's love and devotion that no one can read without feeling the better for it. The volume before us is most daintily printed and illustrated; but in the text, we think, over illustrated. When Lord Alfred, for instance, says to the Duke, "Pray take a cigar," it is trivial to introduce a hand offering a cigar-case; and when we are told that "the world is a nettle," it is surely a childish fancy to show us a specimen of that urticaceous plant, as if to say, "there's your nettle." There is a tendency in the publications of the day to cloy the appetite with pictorial sweets, and this book is a fair example of this tendency. Having said this much, little remains but praise. Some of the larger woodcuts are of remarkable beauty. Although chiefly of the Harper's-Scribner's school they show very little of the dauby sketchiness that we have from time to time been forced to condemn in the illustrations of those magazines. In some instances—notably in Kruell's otherwise admirable block on page 216—the bad rendering of the hands shows unpardonable slovenliness on the part of either the artist or the engraver, and we are inclined to believe that the fault is with the former. Artists, we know, are prone to slur such difficulties, hoping to have their errors corrected in the cutting. In the work under review, however, there are comparatively few examples of this kind, and these are likely to be overlooked in the general excellence of the engravings. Especially good are Mr. Anthony's blocks of Lucille at the piano; of her interview with the Duke (page 142), and of Constance (?) with the letter in her hand. The last named is indeed an exquisite piece of wood-engraving, with its various textures of "an artistic interior" admirably distinguished, without detriment to the general effect—from the "hawthorn vase" and Japanese drapery on the mantelpiece to the Oriental rug before the old-fashioned fireplace. It is the gem of the book. Mr. Snyder's little picture of the drawing-room into which Lord Alfred is ushered on his arrival at Luchon well carries out the spirit of the lines:

"In the white curtains waver'd the delicate shade
Of the bearing acacias, through which the breezes played.
O'er the smooth wooden floor, polish'd dark as glass,
Fragrant white Indian matting allow'd you to pass.
In light olive baskets, by window and door,
Some hung from the ceiling, some crowding the floor,
Rich wild flowers pluck'd by Lucille from the hill,
Seem'd the room with their passionate presence to fill."

The illustration of the interview between his lordship and Lucille, when the love letters are returned—like many of the best cuts in the book—bears the name of neither artist nor engraver. It looks like the work of Mr. Cole, who, perhaps, may also be credited with the frontispiece. Mr. Linton probably cut the block facing page 234; the folds of the women's dresses are admirably rendered. The garden scene (page 266) engraved by F. S. King; the vignette (page 67) by John Karst, and the cedars (page 316) very strongly drawn by James D. Smillie, and cut by Speer, rank among the best wood-engravings of the day. Thomas Moran, F. Hopkinson Smith, Mary Hallock Foote, W. P. Snyder, Granville Perkins, and L. S. Ipsen are among the artists who contribute the drawings. The head pieces by the last-named gentleman are deserving of high praise. In parting we would suggest to the publishers that, when artists work together, they should agree at least on the general characteristics of the principal persons to be portrayed, so that the reader may be able to form some idea of what they may be like. It is provoking, to say the least, to have a heroine who nearly doubles her weight in twenty-four hours, and changes her face as often as her dress.

It may not be out of place to say here that Mr. J. W. Bouton has just brought out a reprint of Chatto's profusely illustrated historical and practical "Treatise on Wood-Engraving." Unfortunately it does not bring down the record to the period referred to in the foregoing comments, which has received, however, some attention at the hands of Mr. Linton in The American Art Review. For a standard work, containing all that need be said on the subject up to within twenty years, we cordially commend Mr. Bouton's publication. An adequate history of recent wood-engraving remains to be written.

THE exquisite pair of bronze vases illustrated on our first page are probably unsurpassed in beauty by anything of their kind ever brought to this country from

Japan. From the graceful outline of the objects themselves to the elaborate finish of the details of ornament they are absolutely above criticism. They are seven inches high—about the size represented in our picture. We have been able to show only one panel in each, but the other six are not a whit less beautiful. Two of them are figure and the rest floral subjects. To those familiar with this high class of Japanese workmanship we need hardly say that there is no soldering in the entire production. Every piece of the relief-work—which is all of the precious metals—is separately clamped into the body of the vases with such neatness that the points of junction cannot be seen. We cannot help calling attention to the charming sentiment of the little pictures in metal of Japanese æsthetes. The air of the love-sick maiden bathing in the moonlight is really delicious.

ART IN DRESS.

If any reason be necessary for the introduction of our new department of "Art in Dress," it may be found in the fact that no publication in this country has hitherto attempted to criticize seriously the passing fashions, or give suggestions from an artistic standpoint for their improvement.

Within the century, at least, there has been no such favorable opportunity as the present for a popular movement for the advancement of the principles of art in relation to dress. Thanks, in no small degree, to the much-ridiculed leaders of the so-called æsthetic movement in England, at no time in the history of fashion has there been more latitude than now for the exercise of individual taste; and as this fortunately is coincident with a general revival in art, it may not be unreasonable to hope that, if properly directed, our gentlewomen may be induced to use their influence to so desirable an end as their emancipation from the thralldom of uneducated dressmakers and milliners. They may begin by insisting that those to whom they intrust the clothing of their persons shall at least know what are the elements of beauty in the female figure; that a long and delicate throat, for example, is not a defect, and that a supple body, sloping shoulders, a flat back, a rounded bust, and wide hips are points to be developed, not concealed by the dress, no matter what Parisian fashion plates may indicate to the contrary.

In such a reform one should be able to count on the active sympathy of the gentlemen who decorate the walls at our art exhibitions. It is a legitimate function of the artist to influence the fashions of the day. Mr. George du Maurier, the clever satirist of Punch, and Mr. James Tissot, are doing this in England in one direction, as Messrs. Burne-Jones and Caldecott, and Miss Kate Greenaway are doing it in others. David, we all know, set the feminine fashions in France from 1795 to 1815, and later Eugène Deveria, Henri Valentin, and Gavarni exercised even a greater influence; although it must be owned that these Frenchmen did not make the best use of their powers. One of our contributors, on another page, introduces the views of some American artists on the subject of dress, which will be duly followed in future numbers of THE ART AMATEUR by those of other artists. Recognizing the great value of the co-operation of these gentlemen, we have invited them to contribute from time to time sketches, which may serve as models for ladies' costumes. Several have already cordially accepted this suggestion, and in early numbers we hope to present a variety of illustrations of this character.

Valuable as must be the views of artists on the matter of dress, of course we shall not depend wholly upon the opinions of men, however qualified they may be, on so peculiarly feminine a subject. There is nothing like the ready pen of a clever woman of society to pierce a passing fashion bubble, and such a pen we have fortunately secured to complement with practical advice the theoretical suggestions of the artists.

THE latest addition to the public sculpture in the city, it is gratifying to note, is an improvement on those chiselled abominations which may be said to distinguish New York. It is a bronze drinking fountain in Union Square, executed by Professor Karl A. Donndorf, of the Stuttgart Art Academy, and generously presented to the people by Mr. D. Willis James. A bronze group of heroic size, representing a mother and

two children in classic drapery, stands on a bronze pedestal, with lions' heads which serve as water-spouts, and this is supported by a base of granite with low buttresses and three steps. The figures are well modelled; but the group is too heavy for the pedestal, with which it has no apparent connection. Conventional and natural objects are oddly mingled in the decoration of the sides of the pedestal. The design as a whole indeed lacks unity and simplicity.

My Note Book.



THE recent gifts to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, none is artistically of more value than the King collection of gems. It was formed by the Rev. C. W. King, a learned Englishman, who, becoming blind, parted with it to Mr. Feuarent, who in the spring of 1879 sold it to Mr. John Taylor Johnson for \$6000. This gentleman has now generously presented it to the Museum. At the reopening of the building the other day the collection attracted much attention, although its treasures were displayed to great disadvantage. The translucent gems ought to be removed from the modern settings, and mounted like the Castellani gems exhibited in New York in 1879, and as are those in the British Museum. They should be so set in holes cut in a velvet-covered board slightly inclined—each example side by side with its plaster cast—that they will receive the light from above, as well as the reflected light from a mirror placed behind the frame. The translucence of the gems thus secured would enable the visitor to judge of their delicate cutting, which, as they are now arranged in the Museum, he can only accept as a fact by a violent effort of the imagination.

NOW the Museum's various collections of historical glassware are arranged they make a fine display, Mr. Marquand's valuable addition of the Charvet collection and Mr. J. Jackson Jarves' Venetian pieces filling several cases. It is noticeable, however, that there are but few specimens of real Greek glass, that there are important gaps in the Venetian glass, and that the examples of the latter are not of the first order of excellence.

THE Egyptian and other casts are rather thrown together than arranged. Classification or labelling has not been attempted. However, too much must not be expected at once. It is a good deal that the trustees should have gone so far as to act on THE ART AMATEUR'S request to put on exhibition the King collection and the generous gift of Mr. Drexel. Let us rest and be thankful. The loan collection of paintings is inferior to that just dispersed—and that was unnecessary. But it is an unfavorable time of the year for borrowing pictures. During the summer the owners may find it safer to send their works of art to the Museum than to fire-proof store-rooms; but when they return to town they want them again. Their absence leaves too obvious gaps on the walls of their saloons.

MOREOVER, some of us enjoy the sense of possession so much that we do not want to share it to the extent of making the objects common. I suppose that it is this feeling which makes many of our wealthy collectors close their picture galleries so jealously to the inspection of the connoisseur. The feeling seems to partake of the fear that one coming too close to a work of art will take away some of its beauty. The Park Commissioners have it too. At the base of the Farragut statue in Madison Square is a broad stone seat made ostensibly to accommodate a dozen tired pedestrians. But you dare not approach it; for you are ordered to "keep off the grass," and on the same principle, however thirsty you may be, you must not approach the new fountain in Union Square.

THE demand for antique gems just now for scarf pins and rings is met by the importation from Rome

and Berlin of paste imitations, taken from casts of fine original intaglios. The glass counterfeit, to the ordinary observer, is dangerously like the true gem. It is supplied with a thin layer of genuine stone attached by invisible cement, so that if there be any doubt expressed as to the genuineness of the intaglio, all the dealer has to do is to submit it to the test of the steel file, which it stands quite bravely. Of course, no one would think of using the file test on the face of a gem. These ingeniously prepared intaglios sell in Rome and Berlin for about two or three francs apiece. In this country, being represented as genuine antiques, they often bring the full value of the same. A person accustomed to the study of such delicate works of art will not readily mistake a cast for a genuine intaglio, however clever the counterfeit. An expert would test the stone by putting it to his lips. If glass it will be warm; if a genuine stone it will be cold.

THE motive which prompted the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to forbid any one copying any object in the building without special permission probably owed its origin to his natural dislike to have every fresh alteration in the Cypriote statuary made the subject for public criticism. A simple precaution for personal safety is intelligible enough. But what is one to understand by the rumor that reaches me that the Museum of Natural History has promised a certain New York publishing house the exclusive right to copy objects for the purpose of magazine illustrations? It seems impossible that this can be true. The management of the Museum of Natural History has always been above suspicion. Yet it may be that the apparent immunity enjoyed by the trustees of the Metropolitan Museum in their contempt for public opinion may have emboldened some officer of the other institution to try a similar experiment.

EVEN barbarous Egypt can teach us a lesson in liberality. In New York an artist is roughly mauled by a policeman for sketching in his note-book some object in the Cesnola collection which takes his fancy. We read in the catalogue of the great Boulaq Museum of Antiquities in Cairo the following notice: "Any one may copy any object or monument in this museum."

GENERAL DI CESNOLA'S lawyers, after "dodging" Mr. Feuarent's libel suit in the State Courts all summer, have suddenly discovered that their opponent is an alien, and retreated to the safe shelter of the United States Courts, where the crowded calendar will not permit the accused Director to be brought to bay before next October. Evidently, they know their client's history perfectly, and will never allow his case to come to trial if they can prevent it.

WAGON loads of débris from the late Morrell fire-proof warehouse have been dumped at Bergen Point, N. J., where they have yielded rich finds to itinerant collectors of bric-à-brac. Many valuable objects thus obtained have been offered for sale to New York dealers.

THE sale at Kirby's rooms of the Fales collection of pictures and bric-à-brac, which was dignified by the publication of a profusely illustrated catalogue, was not a great success. Mr. Fales was a representative American gentleman with the reputation of a connoisseur, who, in his purchases, combined much self-gratification with little knowledge. His death was much lamented by the dealers.

THERE is an unusual profusion of children's holiday books this year, and I am sorry to say that, as a rule, they are not remarkable for artistic merit. Nowhere, perhaps, is it so necessary to insist upon the diffusion of correct art ideas as in the nursery. The impressions which the plastic mind of a child may receive from the study of a toy-book filled with badly drawn and gaudy pictures may never be effaced. No picture which violates the rules of form or color should ever be put before the little ones. I protest against the encouragement given by publishers to every school boy and girl who can handle a pencil to illustrate a book.

Before me are half a dozen or more imitations, more or less weak, of the charming Kate Greenaway books.

THAT talented artist a few years ago introduced a new kind of nursery-book illustration, delightful alike to children and adults. Artists were equally charmed by them, for they found in them a beauty which they could not imitate—a beauty which could only be inspired by the delicate fancy of a woman of taste. The pictures were well drawn and harmoniously tinted. In most of the imitations the drawing and coloring are bad.

THIS criticism applies especially to "The Glad Year Round," by Miss A. G. Plympton, published by James R. Osgood & Co., a house from which one naturally expects something different. "Old Proverbs with New Pictures," by Lizzie Lawson, published by Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., is better in drawing, but in point of color leaves much to be desired. "Three Wise Old Couples," issued by the same firm, is more welcome, despite its flaming cover, which it gives one the toothache to look at. The extravagant rhymes by Mrs. E. T. Corbett are capital, and the pictures by that clever humorist, Hopkins, are undeniably funny. Other Christmas books published by Cassell are "Bessie Bradford's Secret" and the annual volume of the magazine, "Little Folks," which has an attractive cover à la Greenaway, and a remarkably good chromo-lithograph for a frontispiece.

"THE Cruise of the Walnut Shell," describing the adventures in strange lands of two children (in a dream), is a delightful little book, published by Scribner, Welford & Co. The illustrations are excellent in drawing, abundant in fancy, and good in color. A word of praise is due also to George W. Harlan's publication "Tutti-Frutti," an attractive book of child's songs. It is of the Kate Greenaway kind; but the illustrations are rather coarsely executed, and are not colored. It would have improved the appearance of the book, by the way, to have printed it in brown ink, and to have made the text somewhat more legible.

THE literary curiosity of the season is Mr. Louis C. Tiffany's fanciful setting of Mrs. Mary D. Brine's pretty cradle song, "My Boy and I," brought out under his personal supervision by Mr. G. W. Harlan. It is almost superfluous to say, perhaps, that the production is wildly original. It being against Mr. Tiffany's principles to do anything like any one else, he has studiously violated nearly every recognized rule of the arts of the bookbinder and the printer. The pages and flexible covers of unlined leather are held together by knotted skeins of silken thread passed through eyelet holes; and in place of the alphabet of the vulgar, a feeble imitation of a child's feeble attempt at lettering is employed on cover, title-page, and throughout the text, which is jumbled with the illustrations in an agonizing delirium. The publisher has considerably given a key to the puzzle, however, by printing Mrs. Brine's verses with a very handsome font of old English letters; and for this the reader no doubt will be grateful. The illustrations, which are fac-similes of the artist's sketches, are of the slightest character, and are not remarkable for correct drawing. They are credited to Miss Dora Wheeler; but are notably different from what one is accustomed to expect from the hand of that very talented young lady. It is too much to hope, perhaps, that this labored aberration will find no imitators. That it will have no rival it seems safe to say. Mr. Tiffany has apparently reached the acme of artistic affectation.

IN taking leave of Mr. Tiffany's remarkable book it is but fair to say that the liberality of the publisher has been unbounded in carrying out the artist's idea. Mr. George W. Harlan evidently has sublime confidence in the infallibility of Mr. Tiffany. The latter, we are told, "made the engraver travel two hundred miles to receive his instructions at first hand, and stipulated that the engraver's work should be done as many times over as he directed, resolutely insisting that no block should be put upon the press until it produced the precise effect which he intended to produce." Mr. Tiffany therefore is evidently wholly to blame for the miscarriage of this misdirected artistic endeavor.

MONTEZUMA.